A Tribute to the Life of Polly Moor

1909-2004

By: Virginia E. Bishop

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Introduction

Polly Moor was a legend. This tiny lady left her ideas and ideals wherever she went (and she went a lot of places!). She was a keen observer of blind children, and an empathetic listener to their families. Polly came as a consultant and left as a friend. She was a professional in early childhood, with hands-on experience with young blind children, and she shared this dual expertise with teachers, parents, and anyone who could improve the status of children who were visually impaired. She was the driving force behind the Preschool Blind Seminar and kept the group on task with her convictions. She may have looked like a tiny pixie but her knowledge and caring made her a giant. She was an advocate for young blind children before advocacy was popular, and she knew how to ask thought- provoking (even annoying) questions. Polly never let currently accepted theories stand unchallenged when she thought they were wrong, and she wasn't afraid to stand up in a group of professionals and ask for proof. She asked both "Why?" and "Why not?", and dared people to find answers. She may even have been the instigator (gadfly?) who inspired the most complete research on young blind children ever conducted (Project PRISM), and lived to see it completed. Polly was a little bit old-New England "proper," and a little bit whimsically playful, but her determination to improve the status of young blind children made her a giant among us. She will be sorely missed. Perhaps she will be watching over us, to see how we do. In her own words:

> "Professional persons must keep wide horizons. In this technological era, we must be able to recognize what is significant, holding on to it (like the old rocking chair), and ready to sift and discard whatever is unimportant. We may give due respect to the 'pushbutton' approaches that are all around us, but must encourage the scholarly approaches that involve inquiry, ingenuity, and creativity--elements inherent in the art of teaching."

Her Life

Pauline Margaret Moor was born in Odell, Illinois on May 19, 1909. She was the only child of Reverend David Z. Moor and Lena Whitford Moor. Polly's father was a late 1880s Armenian immigrant who worked his way through high school (Mt. Hermon School for Boys, Mt. Hermon, Massachusetts), Williams College, and Yale Divinity School. Lena was from Cromwell, Connecticut. Polly's father was a Congregational minister who had churches in North Dakota, Indiana, Illinois, Minnesota, and St. Petersburg, Florida. When Polly was five years old, her father died (at age 43). Polly and her mother relocated to Northfield, Massachusetts, sometime before 1920. (The 1920 Census records show Mrs. Moor, widowed, and her 10-year-old daughter, living in Northfield.) Polly's mother ran a boarding house not far from the Trinitarian Church, and both Polly and her mother attended that church regularly. Polly's mother made her promise never to sell their house, and Polly kept that promise until a few years before her death. Polly never lived in that house after her mother died (1952), but rented it out. When Polly was "home" on visits, she stayed with a friend, Dorothy Noble (who also had a house in Northfield). Polly always attended the Trinitarian Church when she was in Northfield.

Polly attended high school at Northfield School for Girls, graduating in 1927. She played the piano and xylophone, and hated athletics. She was a reporter for the high school yearbook, "The Northfield Star," and tried her hand at drama (she played one of the orphans in the play "Daddy Long Legs"). Her favorite expression in high school was "Who'd a thunk it?"

Polly went on to college (on a partial scholarship), attending Smith College in Northhampton, Massachusetts. While at Smith, Polly was in the Math Club, Choir, and Glee club. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in 1931. She attended her 10th, 15th, and 20th Smith College Class Reunions.

Polly continued graduate work at Smith College for nine more years, and earned a Master of Arts degree in 1940. Her thesis topic was "A History of the Education of Preschool Children in the Social Settlements of Boston." Her major was Child Development. She was a member of the New England Association for Nursery Education.

There is a gap in the records of two years after Polly's college graduation (the years 1931-1933). It is believed that she worked as an intern with Dr. Arnold Gesell (Yale Institute of Child Development) for two years, although this could not be documented. (Since Polly and Dr. Gesell were both members of the New England Association for Nursery Education, this might have been how they became acquainted.) Polly told Lee Robinson about an assignment from Dr. Gesell – to give a presentation to others on the staff about how blindness impacts early development. Polly recalled being "very nervous" because she didn't think she knew enough to be credible. (Dr. Gesell included eleven pages about the early development of a blind child, in his book *Vision: Its Development in Infant and Child*, so he was interested in and DID observe and study a blind child.) Polly could very well have had her first brief exposure to blindness in young children during this time, but it would be later that she actually accumulated direct experience with blind children and their families.

During the time Polly was working on her Masters degree, she was also accumulating work experience in the field of early education. She taught first, second, and third grades at the Merricourt School in Berlin, Connecticut for a year (1933-34) before accepting a job teaching kindergarten at Denison House in Boston. Hilda Denman tells how Polly decorated her classrooms with the color "that enlivened and created a very happy, congenial place." Hilda also says that Polly played the piano at a "lively pace" and with "cheerfulness that permeated the school room." Ruth Butler says that Polly was a "fantastic story teller" and was often asked to retell her stories to the other teachers and workers.

Polly's abilities must have been recognized immediately, for, within the same year (1934), she became the Director of the Nursery School (and Assistant Director of Activities for 5-10 year olds) at the Hale House Association in Boston. She held this position for nine years. While working for Hale House Association, Polly lived at the Lincoln House with several other women: Hilda Denman, Edith Swift, Grace Willis, and Ruth Butler. Polly maintained friendships with these women most of her life and some of them have shared their memories of Polly for this biography.

In 1943, Polly took the position of Supervisor of Child Care Programs in Waterbury, Connecticut. The Kingsbury Child Care Center was a government-funded daycare center

for children of defense workers. Under Polly's supervision, a second similar center was opened, and both programs became models in the field of early childhood. Films were made of the children attending the programs, and the films were sent overseas, to reassure the troops that their children were being well cared for. Polly supervised these programs for three years. As the war ended, and government funds disappeared, the programs were closed.

Almost immediately, Polly got a call from an old friend, Ruth Butler, who was then a Social Worker at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Hospital in Boston. Ruth invited Polly to interview for a position in a research program under the direction of Dr. Theodore Terry, a patholgist at Eye and Ear. Dr. Terry was interested in the unusual phenomenon of blindness in premature infants, and had organized a study of 140 of these children. Most of the medical profession at the time had assumed that retrolental fibroplasia(RLF) was a brain disorder – a medical problem related to "bad eggs" (fetuses that would otherwise have died but were kept alive when incubators became available to save prematurely born infants). Dr. Terry believed that RLF was a problem whose cause was somehow related to factors occurring post natally to premature babies, and his theory needed verification; he planned to study premature infants who had developed RLF, to identify what those factors were, and had accumulated a team of researchers that included: Eunice Wilson (Director of Social Work), Ruth Butler (Social Worker and family liason person), Jane Davis (Psychologist), and Jane Hollenback (Psychiatrist); Polly became part of that team in 1946. She hesitated at first, thinking she didn't know enough about blindness to be able to contribute anything to the team of researchers. Apparently, Dr. Terry thought otherwise, and Polly was hired as the team's Educator and Child Development Specialist. (It was Dr. Terry who suggested to Polly that she devote her life to work with blind children. Unfortunately, Dr. Terry died the morning after giving Polly that advice, so he never lived to see how Polly's life followed his predictions.)

A little-known story about Dr. Terry's research center was that some of the premature babies in Dr. Terry's study were from well-to-do families who had the means to care for

their children at home, rather than placing them in institutions. Irma and Milton Krents, ~~who~~ brought their 14 month old infant, Harold, to Dr. Terry, seeking an opinion on what kind of future their son might have; Dr. Terry encouraged the Krent's to focus on Harold's potential, not the discouraging future predicted by other doctors. (Harold ultimately attended the Scarsdale schools and earned a law degree (cum laude) from Harvard Law School; he was the inspiration for the 1969 Broadway play "Butterflies are Free" and the 1980 CBS movie "To Race The Wind;" Harold was also the subject of a "This Is Your Life" program. He died at age 42 of a brain tumor, and the Harvard Law School planted a tree in his honor on campus.)

It was during her 5 years at Massachusetts Eye and Ear Hospital that Polly accumulated invaluable first-hand experience with young children blinded by retrolental fibroplasia (retinopathy of prematurity). Joyce Nesker-Simmons tells a story about Polly that reveals how observant she was. When Polly met her first patient, it was a blind toddler who observed, "We are in the bathroom, aren't we?" Polly realized that the child had recognized the similarity between the tile floor at the hospital and the floor in the bathroom at home. She continued to observe how blind toddlers functioned, and she interviewed and listened to the family of the children. She learned from each child and his/her family, saw differences and similarities, and recognized the uniqueness in the development of blind children. Polly's observations were passed on to the team of researchers, who were able to document many of the suspected developmental anomalies. Polly's contributions to Dr. Terry's team undoubtedly enriched the data as he wrote some of the first papers linking prematurity and the potential for visual impairment. Polly' s presence on Dr. Terry's team enhanced services so much that when she left the program it had a qreatly improved support system for families of blind children.

Jane Hollenback, Psychiatrist at the Eye and Ear Hospital in Boston, had considerable influence on Polly during her years with Dr. Terry. Although Jane never wrote articles or papers, she challenged Polly to ask questions and seek answers. For example, Jane and Polly often discussed blindisms" (rocking, hand flapping, etc.) within the context of developing body awareness; they reasoned that similar behaviors were fleeting and exploratory for children with sight but served a different purpose for blind children – that of exploring space and learning where one's body was, in that space. Jane and Polly were also ahead of their time in advocating "skin-to-skin" contact between infants and their fathers (a practice currently encouraged for premature infants). Polly theorized that even a small amount of vision in infancy would have impact on later development. She accurately observed that even light perception in infancy resulted in better posture and a more positive body image. Many of Polly's ideas have turned out to be farsighted and accurate.

Polly met but did not agree with Selma Fraiberg. Polly felt that the practice of screening subjects for Fraiberg's studies did not reflect a true sampling of blind children. Although-the research on blind children probably became the main reason Fraiberg was remembered, Polly's intuition and theories, and her compassion for families, may have made a greater impact on understanding how young blind children grow and develop.

Polly didn't like labels. She felt that infants, toddlers, and preschoolers were too young for definitive diagnoses, and that early developmental milestones should be more important. In fact, Jack Curtis, psychologist at the Missouri School for the Blind, reinforced Polly's feelings, and went one step further by saying that there were no tests available that could be used appropriately with blind children. (He even used the revered Maxfield-Buchholz Social Maturity Scale as a parent guide, rather than an evaluation instrument.)

It seems as if Polly's life up until 1952 had been preparing her for the position she took next. She was appointed to the staff at the American Foundation for the Blind, as a Specialist in Child Development (the first position of its kind at AFB). For the next twenty-two years, Polly would criss-cross the United Stated (by train) many times, help to establish programs for young blind children, write ten publications, extend her ideas to the few teacher preparation programs at that time, and make hundreds of friends. This is the time for which Polly is probably best remembered.

The AFB Years

In the early 1950's, the American Foundation for the Blind recognized the need for a national consultant in early child hood/preschool. There were thousands of young children blinded by RLF; their parents, agencies, teachers, and schools were in desperate heed of guidance and support. Polly Moor had just completed 5 years as part of a research study on RLF babies, and she had had 15 years of experience with young children. She was probably the only person in the world with the necessary qualifications for the job. Not only did she accept the position at AFB, but she fulfilled the requirements for over 20 years. Her tenure spanned both the RLF and Rubella epidemics, and the recognition of blindness as part of multiple disabilities. All of her publications were during her years at AFB.

Polly became the "preschool" part of a team that included Annette Dinsmore, Consultant in Deafblind, and Georgie Lee Abel, Consultant in Education of Blind Children. These three complemented one another perfectly, and often worked as a team to bring parents and educators together. Of course, Polly was the acknowledged expert in the growth and development of blind children, ages birth to five. But it was Georgie Lee who traveled the country, revolutionizing educational services for blind children.

In the latter years of this triumvirate Kay Gruber became their Supervisor. Her presence prompted Polly and Kay to collaborate on publications that at last emphasized the plight of blind children with additional disabilities.

Polly helped to accelerate mainstreaming for blind children. As one of her duties as an AFB consultant, she was involved in the National Work Session on the Education of Blind with Sighted, held in Upper Saranac Lake, New York, in the summer of 1953. *The Pinebrook Report* (1954) was the document produced by that work session, and it outlined the "state-of-the-art" in educational services for blind children. Moreover, it set the pattern for mainstreaminq these children, 20 years before federal law mandated integrated education. This vision of educational practice did not escape Polly Moor, for she interpreted the philosophy as it applied to the youngest visually impaired children: preschoolers, too, should have the opportunity to be educated with their peers.

While Polly was the Preschool Consultant, AFB also sponsored a number of other national workshops. Four of these spanned the summers from 1959 through 1962, inclusive, and were in collaboration with the special education departments at Northwestern, Peabody, San Francisco State, and Minnesota universities. The emphasis of the workshops was on the growing problem of children with multiple disabilities. Polly was instrumental in summarizing the conclusions of those four workshops, and two publications resulted: No Place to Go (1963) and No Time to Lose (1964).

As the AFB Preschool Consultant, Polly was in demand, to engineer workshops, speak to parent groups, inspire teachers, instigate services, and to keep her fingers on the collective pulse of young blind children. She kept up a daunting travel schedule of cross-country

tours, where she spoke, taught, and convinced all who would listen. Sometimes she traveled alone, and other times she was accompanied by other AFB consultants (e.g., Kathryn Gruber or Georgie Lee Abel). There are many anecdotes associated with Polly's travels (always by train, for she refused to fly), and anyone who knew Polly well has heard at least one of these tales.

Georgie Lee and Kathryn repeatedly tried to help Polly "update" her wardrobe, restyle her hair, and handle her clothes while traveling. One story says that Georgie Lee suggested that a good way to get any wrinkles out of packed clothes was to hang them over the bathtub; presumably, the steam from a hot bath would smooth out any wrinkles. Polly resisted these attempts to "help" her, and, no doubt she felt justified on one occasion when Georgie Lee telephoned Polly, saying "Help! My blue lace is floating in the bathtub!"

At one of her many lectures to students at a university preparing to teach blind children, Polly told a story about visiting an art gallery. She related that she had seen a painting that, on first glance, looked like a solid wall of a mountain—not very interesting. But as she looked more closely at it, she spotted a small flower growing out of one of the crevices in the mountain wall. The painting suddenly became more interesting. Then she looked at its title: "Nothing is Insignificant". Now the painting became profound.

One one of her trips to the northwest, Polly chose to room at a YWCA. Her roommate was a somewhat muscular lady, who Polly eyed with some apprehension. However, when Polly unpacked her suitcase, and several ping pong balls and bells fell out, Polly's roommate was the one with questions. The two women struck up a conversation and discovered that Polly used the balls and bells in her work with children, while her roommate was a circus gymnast. Thereafter, whenever the circus was in New York, Polly's new friend saw that free tickets awaited her.

On one train trip, over a Memorial Day weekend, Polly had a two-hour layover at midnight, in Pittsburgh, PA. She called Ralph Peabody, and he agreed to come down to the railroad station and spend the time with her; they had some planning to do, for a future engagement, so two hours seemed like a good time to complete their plans. At first, they stood on the train platform to talk, but because it got a little chilly outside, the train conductor said they could use the club car until departure time. The time passed more quickly than either Polly or Ralph anticipated and suddenly the train pulled out of the station. Ralph was stuck on the train, without his wallet or identification, and had to ride all the way to Steubenville, Ohio, where Polly lent him enough money for an overnight hotel and a bus ride home the next day.

Polly wasn't afraid to strike up conversations with strangers. (In those days, it was not quite as dangerous as it might be today.) She often met interesting people, and made lifelong friends. On one train ride, she reported meeting Sonny Tipps, the rodeo rider. On another occasion, she met (and became friends with) Arthur Godfry; she was even invited as a guest to his home in "The Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginny."

On another long train trip, it was late at night, and Polly had gone to the club car to read. (She never traveled by Pullman, and often rode as much as 72 hours by coach.) She and one other gentleman were at opposite ends of the club car - both reading, but both glancing up occasionally to survey the other. Finally, Polly got up and walked back to the gentleman and said "There's magic in children." The man smiled and agreed and the two travelers talked long into the night. The man was Marcel Marceau.

Polly was an optimist, and she often saw what she *wanted* to see; it was usually the good in people or ideas. Once, while walking along a New York street, without missing a beat, she stepped over a homeless drunk who had passed out on the sidewalk. Polly's companions recalled later having seen the sleeping man and mentioned it to Polly.....who remarked "What man?"

Polly was reportedly a technical advisor when "The Miracle Worker" was a Broadway stage production. She gave suggestions about how Helen might have acted as a child, and became somewhat friendly with Ann Bancroft.

Once when Ralph Peabody was in New York visiting AFB, Polly rushed up to him and asked whether he was a "bull" or a "bear." She was taking a course on investing in the stock market, and wanted to know Ralph's financial philosophy. Polly continuously took courses in whatever hit her fancy at the moment, and she was one of the original "life-long learners".

When the World's Fair was in New York, Polly went every weekend. She was fascinated with new ideas, and enjoyed contemplating future trends. Whenever Polly taught a course, she tried to challenge her students. She always wrote an inspirational quotation on the board, at the beginning of each class (quotes were not necessarily related to blindness). She also posed thoughtful questions to her students, encouraging them to think and observe, not just accept textbook theory.

Although Polly spent over 20 years with AFB, she always considered Boston her home. Most of her personal possessions were in storage. From time to time, Polly would retrieve an item and keep it in her office at AFB (e.g., an authentic silver Revere teapot). When Polly "moved" to New York, she must have viewed it a temporary home, for she stayed with a friend (Dorothy Noble) and slept on a roll-away bed; that arrangement lasted a number of years.

On June 12, 1974, AFB held a retirement party for Polly (she had just turned 65 in May). Over 50 AFB staff and nearly 20 personal friends were invited. A written tribute to Polly said that ".....preschool programs on an integrated basis can be carried out effectively.....largely due to Miss Moor's efforts." Polly retired from AFB on June 30, 1974.

"Retirement"

Retirement from AFB was not the end of Polly's career or influence. She continued as a consultant, providing support (both emotional and informational) to parents, teachers, programs, and policies. Possibly, Polly's greatest legacy was the International Preschool Blind Seminar, and its history makes interesting reading because Polly was right there in the middle of it. The following four paragraphs were taken from one of Polly's own opening presentations, believed to have been offered during the early 1980s. These were her words:

"In 1975, there were six model programs for visually impaired children, funded under the Handicapped Children's Early Education Program (P.L. 91-230). Each was designed for service solely to young visually impaired children and their parents, but each had a different focus (children living in rural areas; emotional problems; non-verbal children; center-based services; a "home-settinq" in a public school; coordination of services to multiply handicapped children). Each model was required to develop checklists and/or guidelines, and some type of curriculum; each model was responsible for the assessment of children served, and for some evaluation procedure of the program itself.

"There was a growing feeling among the staffs of the various projects that they were operating in isolation, and that it would be helpful if they could meet, become acquainted with what each model was doing, share materials being produced, and avoid duplication as much as possible.

"At the invitation of the Infant Program for Visually Impaired of the Ingham Intermediate School District in Mason, Michigan" (Sherry Raynor, Director), "a first seminar was held in Lansing, Michigan (February 12-14, 1975). Representatives from the six models were present, and also one person from the special education department of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (Toronto, Ontario, Canada)" (Ian Davidson); the Canadian representative was interested in developing a manual for parents of preschool blind children. The presence of this latter representative gave the seminar an international aspect, and its 'international' name. Also invited to this seminar were representatives from state and local agencies serving young visually impaired children in the geographical area.

In the following years, the federally funded models were fewer in number. As federal funds were withdrawn, other agencies serving preschool visually impaired chi1dren increased the annua1 seminar attendance. In 1977, there were representatives from programs being conducted in the states of Arkansas, Colorado, Oreqon, Arizona, Virginia, Missouri, Maryland, Idaho, Utah, Washington, and in Toronto, Canada. The need for a national conference was most apparent. It was suggested that the American Foundation for the Blind be asked to sponsor such a session, and, with the approval of its Board of Directors, the North American Conference on Visually Handicapped Infants and Preschool Children was held, in Minneapolis, Minnesota (May 22-25, 1978); more than 600 persons attended."

Future meetings of the Seminars have continued almost annually (see Appendix for a list of dates and places), and have retained the forum (work session") design. Attendance has been limited to 35 invited participants, and most seminars have produced position papers or similar documents. The list of attendees over the years reads like a "Who's Who" in the field of work for preschool blind children: Berthold Lowenfeld, Verna Hart, Natalie Barraga, Nancy Akeson, Chris Tompkins, Sherry Raynor, J.C.Greeley, Kay Ferrell, Deborah Hatton, Sherrie Moore, and many other outstanding authors, doctors, and teachers who serve preschool blind children. Dr. William Silverman (one of the pioneer researchers in RLF), Dr. Creig Hoyt (expert in septo-optic dysplasia and optic nerve hypoplasia), and Dr. Jim Jan (known for his observations of children with cortical visual impairment) have been invited guests at several of the Seminars. Presentations have been voluntary and limited in number; the emphasis has remained as it was originally: the sharing of ideas and materials, and taking collective action that impacts current policy. Polly attended nearly all of the Seminars (until her health began to fail) and kept everyone "on task." She also acted as "historian" and opened each Seminar with a brief account of how the group began, why it existed, and what its goals were. This was no small task for Polly, and it is truly remarkable that she was able to provide such common purpose for such a loosely organized group (there are no "officers," no treasury or dues, and no official directors; all participation is voluntary, and agencies assume major costs as the venues rotate.). The "glue" that has held the Seminar together has been the common interests and purposes of the participants, and Polly was the one who injected that "glue"...liberally! The group valued Polly's perspectives and contributions so much that she was a constant participant and was invited to each seminar at the host's expense. All participants who met her for the first time, whether it was in Austin, Pittsburgh, Phoenix, Chicago, or Monterey, were struck by her wisdom, her commitment, and her desire to see that services to blind children improved. Many of the events and practices in work for preschool blind and visually impaired children since the 1970's came from the Seminars. Polly was often the one who, after listening to participants debate, argue, discuss, and tease each other, would remind us that the purpose of the seminar was to develop and disseminate something of value to those serving blind children. Indeed, the list of "products" emerging from the Seminars is impressive and has had considerable impact on services for young blind children and their families.

Polly's Later Years

At some point, Polly moved into a senior-housing complex (Peter Cooper). Many of her close friends were there, and they checked on each other regularly. They not only called each other daily, but each person also had the necessary emergency phone numbers of all the rest--people to call in an emergency. Polly retained good vision as she got older, but some of her friends did not. Within Peter Cooper, there were at least two friends who needed a companion for occasions when they chose to walk beyond the apartment grounds. One friend frequented record stores, and Polly acted as his sighted guide--not only to go to and from the stores, but also to read the record and CD labels to him. Another friend, Margaret Krasche, lost her vision late in life, so Polly saw that she got "out to eat" about once a week, always at the same restaurant.

Polly never learned to drive; she took taxis or walked. She frequented a small, local grocery store, and attended church (and study groups) regularly at the 5th Avenue Presbyterian Church. If Polly had a visitor from out-of-town, she took him/her sightseeing all over New York, from the Statue of Liberty to St. Paul's Cathedral. She knew where all of the public restrooms were located, and planned her itineraries to take advantage of them.

One winter, when Polly was in her seventies, she was walking home one evening along 23rd Street. Two hoodlums attempted to grab her purse. To avoid bodily injury, Polly threw her purse, and thugs went after it. In the scuffle, Polly fell and bruised her shoulder and arm, but was able to get back to the safety of her apartment--sans purse, and very angry, but with only injuries that would heal in time.

Some time in 2000 or 2001 (Polly would have been 91 or 92), Polly had a bad fall and broke her hip. The injury curtailed her traveling, and her health began to deteriorate. She used a walker to get around her apartment, and a housekeeper (Gloria Layne) looked after her. Gloria was with Polly when she passed away, on August 6, 2004. She was 95. Funeral services were held at the Andrett Funeral Home 6 days later. There were only a few friends in attendance (among them, Hal and Hilda Denman, friends from Polly's early years at Hale House in Boston). Polly was buried at West Northfield Cemetery, in Northfield, Massachusetts.

Personal Tributes to Polly

When Tanni Anthony sent out a "call for Polly tales," one person responded by mail: Dr. Ralph Peabody, a close friend of Polly's; Ralph graciously gave over an hour by phone, to relay many anecdotes, which have been imbedded in this narrative. Two other people (Dr. Lee Robinson and J.C. Greeley) sent written tributes of their own, and they are included here, just as submitted.

From **J.C. Greeley**:

> "When I first entered our baby field, about 25 years ago, I knew of Polly Moor as legendary. She had "retired" from AFB, but was hardly retiring. In 1987" (Polly would have been 78.)"1 went to Denver's Union Railroad Station to pick Polly up for Colorado's first hosting of the Preschool Seminar in Estes Park. After riding the train for 72 hours from New York City, in a non-reclining seat, I figured she must have retired for good; I couldn't find her. After the crowd exited the platform, I was still looking for this larger than life figure, but there was only a very teeny tiny lady tugging a suitcase and jumping up and down on the edge of the platform because she could see the Rocky Mountains; she was Polly.
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> "By the time Polly left some days later, she had become larger than life in my eyes. She had climbed to the highest lookout point you can, in Rocky Mountain National Park (way above tree level, with lots of steps, and she did it in her "practical" heels. She had danced on top of a picnic table because Tom Miller was too tall for her to dance with at ground level. She had made sure the Seminar groups never quit working before midnight, even if we were in the haunted Stanley Hotel. She never skipped a beat at that Seminar, or any other times when concerns for young children and babies with visual impairments needed political support or more medical knowledge--and she always urged us to "make it happen," using our own resources. She "networked" before there was such a thing, and she always was the group taskmaster, so that we would stay true to our purpose. Anytime she could, Polly would take extra days to visit with new and old programs serving "her" little ones, and to offer support to overworked teachers and struggling parents. No one ever felt hopeless after being with Polly. She left one feeling inspired to be a part of new findings, research, and programs, without losinq the essence of caring from the heart. She loved life, especially "her babies" and everyone who touched them. As teachers, families, and friends: Thank you, Polly, for embracing us!"

From **Dr. Lee Robinson**:

"Legendary people are gifted, do extraordinary things, often do not receive recognition, are humble, give others credit for their work, are enthusiastic, encourage others to excel, share their talents, are passionate about their work, and are highly ethical . Polly Moor was all of these and much more."

"Meeting such a legend is an opportunity that may only come a few times in a lifetime; I have had that privilege at least once. I first met Polly when she visited a university class in 1969. She engaged me in conversation about things of interest I was studying. I remember her attitude and commitment to serving blind children and their families, rather than specific points of her presentation. That night it was snowing, and after class one of Polly's concerns was to know whether everyone would get home safely."

"Polly was a person of conviction. As most of her friends knew, she would NOT fly! I never knew whether it was fear, or that she just didn't believe in it. Nevertheless, the story is told of Polly being put to the test by having responsibilities in New York and Los Angeles in the same week. When asked how she would accomplish this assignment without flying, she said 'I will finish my work in New York on Friday, take the train to Los Angeles and be there in time for the meetings. I will leave Los Angeles after the meetings and take the train in time to be back in New York for the next meetings.....and, furthermore, I will get a lot of work done while I am traveling.' Whatever her reason was for not flying, she maintained her position at all cost.

"As Polly traveled, she was often asked to visit individual families. Many times, she offered the first ray of hope to those parents, saying that their blind child could learn and be successful. As a result, wherever she went, there were friends, often parents of children she saw. Polly often mentioned real experiences she had had, to illustrate issues of concern to families, and how their needs could be met. Her accounts also demonstrated the great love and compassion she had for each individual and family.

"Polly's work was recognized by other 'legends' in the field of visual impairment. These included Berthold Lowenfeld, Katherine Maxfield, Josephine Taylor, Margaret Blum, Nancy Akeson, and the many parents and professionals she met after her retirement. Each person who met her immediately knew her as a friend, both personally and professionally. They also came to know that she wanted what was best for blind children, and that she expected and encouraged excellence.

"Polly was instrumental in establishing many of the well-known private programs for young blind children. Among these were: The Blind Babies Foundation in San Francisco, Foundation for Blind Children in Phoenix, Delta Gamma Center in St. Louis, Dallas Services in Texas, a preschool program in Salt Lake City, and others.

"When the Seminar group met in Sun Valley, Idaho, I agreed to meet Polly's train in Salt Lake City, as I traveled to Idaho from Texas, and bring her to the meeting. An overnight stay at my parents' home in southern Idaho was part of the plan. My parents were totally in love with Polly from the very moment they met, and always asked about her on my other visits home.

"Polly had not visited Idaho, except to go through it on the train; she was, as usual, interested in everything, especially Idaho potatoes. During that short stay at my parents' house, she wanted to see potato fields, where French Fried and instant potatoes were made, what kinds of potatoes there were, and when they were planted and harvested. In short, she took the opportunity to learn as much as she could about potatoes! What impressed her most was the size of the potato fields, and the size of the 'bakers.' She often reminded me of that stay, saying 'I never knew potatoes grew so large!' Polly, ever the gracious and proper guest, wrote to my parents a wonderful letter of thanks.

"On that same trip, Polly wanted to see the ski run 'up close.' She waded knee-deep in snow to get near enough to the ski run so she could get a sense of how fast the skiers were traveling. Most of the other seminar participants didn't brave the cold or the snow for such an experience, but this is the way Polly approached every new experience--with excitement in learning first-hand about whatever others could share. I remember the Seminar at Perkins, when most participants were off to see the sights of Boston on a 'free' afternoon; Polly stayed behind with Betty Dominguez and her daughter, Jolene, who came to several seminars with her parents. Jolene had a seizure and needed the comfort and care that follows. Polly chose to stay and visit with Betty, rather than following the usual practice of looking for some new experience for herself. Again, this gracious and kind lady spent time giving of herself. She complimented Betty for the care given her daughter, and kept her company so she would not feel alone; Polly's concern with the little things meant a great deal to Betty.

"Polly had some strong personal convictions that guided her approach to blind children and their families. Some of these were:

- that parents and families were a key to success in raising a blind child

- that the whole child, not just behavior, was important to a child's development

- that education of blind children required direct contact with the environment

- that children with multiple disabilities deserved opportunities to reach their highest potential

These beliefs, as well as her personal religious convictions, were a part of her basic constitution."

"After 95 years of energetic life and dedicated service, Polly passed away peacefully at her home in New York City. Her contributions to our field during her lifetime cannot be overstated. I will miss Polly's friendship and counsel. I am truly fortunate to have met a legend in our time."

APPENDIX

Polly's Writings

Venues of the Preschool Blind Seminar

"Products" from the Preschool Blind Seminar

Acknowledgements

Polly's Writings

1. A Blind Child Too Can Go To Nursery School. (1952). New York: American Foundation for the Blind.

2. "Meeting the Needs of the Preschool Blind Child and His Parents" (1954). Education, Vol. 74 (February 1954), pp. 382-389.

3. "Meeting the Needs of Young Blind Children: An Institute for Houseparents of Visually Handicapped Children" (Proceedings) (1957). New York: American Foundation for the Blind. pp.13-15.

4. "The Preschool Blind Child: His Needs and Resources" Workshop Presentation at "The Blind Child in the Classroom" (1958) University of Denver, Denver, Colorado. June 23-27, 1958.

5. No Place to Go: A Symposium. Kathryn Gruber and Pauline Moor, Eds. (1963) New York: American Foundation for the Blind. (89 pages)

6. "Who Are the Children and What Are They Like?" (1965) International Journal for the Education of the Blind. Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 20-22. (October 1965)

7. No Time to Lose. Pauline Moor, Ed. New York: American Foundation for the Blind. (1968)

8. "Comprehensive Care Services for the Young Child Who Is Visually Impaired." New Outlook for the Blind, (May 1975) Vol. 69, No. 5, pp.193-200.

9. "Toilet Training for the Blind Child" (Pamphlet) (no date) New York: American Foundation for the Blind.

10. "The Dilemma of Parents of Visually Impaired Children." (late 1970's?) (suspect this was a paper presented to a parent seminar of some type)

International Seminar on Preschool Blind Children
(Dates and Venues)

1975	Lansing, Michigan	1st Seminar
1976	Lansing, Michigan	2nd Seminar
1977	Lansing, Michigan	3rd Seminar
1978	Minneapolis, Minnesota	4th Seminar
1979	Sun Valley, Idaho	5th Seminar
1980	Austin, Texas	6th Seminar
1981	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	7th Seminar
1982	Phoenix, Arizona	8th Seminar
1983	Dallas, Texas	9th Seminar
1984	Asilomar, California	10th Seminar
1985	Alamogordo, New Mexico	11th Seminar
1986		
1987	Estes Park, Colorado	12th Seminar
1988	Winnetka, Illinois	13th Seminar
1989	Toronto, Canada (cancelled)	
1990	Raleigh, North Carolina	14th Seminar
1991	Salt Lake City, Utah	15th Seminar
1992		
1993	Milwaukee, Wisconsin	16th Seminar
1994		
1995	Watertown, Massachusetts	17th Seminar
1996		
1997	Estes Park, Colorado	18th Seminar
1998	Treasure Island, Florida	19th Seminar
1999	Asilomar, California	20th Seminar
2000		
2001	Seaside, Oregon	21st Seminar
2002	Berea, Kentucky	22nd Seminar
2003		
2004	Sedona, Arizona	23rd Seminar
2005	Watertown, Massachusetts	24th Seminar

"Products" Generated by the Preschool Blind Seminar

1977	Advocacy Statement for Preschool Blind Children; presented at the White House Conference on Handicapped Children.
	Recommendation for a national newsletter on preschool blind children; NATIONAL NEWSPATCH (published by the Oregon School for the Blind) resulted; is still being published today.
1979	Resolution sent to teacher preparation programs, urging that information about young blind children be included in teacher preparation programs.
1983	Position Paper developed on Programs for Blind and Visually Impaired Infants and Young Children; updated in 1990; ratified by the Division on Visual Impairment (DVI) of the Council for Exceptional Children, 1991.
1984	Individualized Programming for Blind and Visually Impaired Infants and Young children: Goals and Objectives (a set of developmentally sequenced goals and objectives)
1990	Fact Sheet: How Blindness Affects Early Development
1995	Recommended Practices for Vision Screening of Children Ages Birth to Five Years; finalized in 1997.
1995-2000	Model Registry of Early Childhood Visually Impaired; a database managed by the American Printing House for the Blind ("Babies Count")
2002	Revision of the original Position Paper (Programs for Blind and Visually Impaired Infants and Young Children); renamed Family Centered Practices for Infants and Young Children with Visual Impairments; accepted/ratified by DVI in 2003.

Note: Although Project PRISM was not directly instigated or funded by the Preschool Blind Seminar, the need for such longitudinal research was discussed many times at Seminars. It is the only such research to collect developmental data from a large (over 200) sample; many of the center-based programs involved in the Preschool Blind Seminar participated in the data collection for Project PRISM.

Acknowledgments

This brief tribute to Polly Moor could not have been written without the contributions of a great number of people--those who knew Polly personally, those who were professional acquaintances, and those whose lives she touched. A listing of her friends would fill many pages, and many of her contemporaries are no longer around to interview, but anyone who was willing to share an anecdote will find his/her name below. Some information was gathered by phone, while other stories came from personal interview. Factual data was provided from archival papers at the American Foundation for the Blind, and from Polly's own writings. The authors of this tribute are certain that there probably were many more "Polly tales" we did not find, for her uniqueness left impressions wherever she went. However, every attempt was made to collect and document as much information about Polly as possible. Thanks to the following people who helped:

Mrs. Hilda Denman, a long-time friend of Polly's; it was Hilda who notified us that Polly had passed away.

Daniel Cuff, Librarian, AFB, who hunted basic biographical information from the AFB archives.

Dr. Lee Robinson, who had personal memories of Polly, and who helped hunt down facts.

Dr. Tanni Anthony, who put out a "call for stories" about Polly.

Dr. Ralph Peabody, a personal friend of Polly's, and who provided most of the "train tales" and many personal anecdotes.

J.C. Greeley, who took the time to write a personal tribute to Polly (it is included verbatim in this narrative).

Joyce Nesker-Simmons, who introduced Polly when she was honored by the Preschool Blind Seminar a few years back.

Dr. Gideon Jones, who filled in some of the anecdotes about Polly.

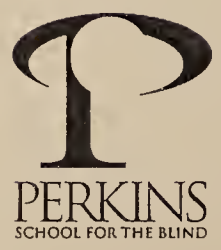
Dr. Samuel Ritvo, Yale Institute Child Study Center, who searched records for evidence of Polly's association with Dr. Gesell.

Ed Finch, a neighbor of Polly's mother in Northfield, MA; Ed patiently searched local records for evidence of Polly's early life in Northfield

Ruth Butler, a friend and colleague from Polly's early professional life, who related many details from the years at Mass. Eye and Ear Hospital.

Abe Dorfman, Polly's Executor, who shared some of Polly's scrapbooks, yearbooks, letters, and photographs.

Phil Hatlen, Superintendent of the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired for his encouragement in writing this tribute and for his input on Polly's AFB years



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